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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9262  
INFO RUEHXS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PRIORITY  
RUCNISL/ISLAMIC COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 2636  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5130  
RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY 3848  
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 2741  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2093  
RUEHBA/AMCONSUL PERTH 0880  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 001143

SIPDIS

DEPT. FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS, DRL, DRL/AWH, DRL/IRF  
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SUBJECT: SECT MEMBERS ALLOWED TO WORSHIP DESPITE EDICT

REF: JAKARTA 1134 AND PREVIOUS

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Classified By: DepPol/C Stanley Harsha, for reasons 1.4 (b+d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Vice President Yusuf Kalla made a public assurance on June 10 that the Islamic sect Ahmadiyah will be free to worship in the privacy of their mosques, despite the June 9 joint decree outlawing Ahmadis from religious activities (reftel). A senior Justice Ministry official publicly criticized the decree, saying it may have been the result of pressure from hardline groups. Several observers told us the Ahmadiyah controversy is possibly an effort to destabilize President Yudhoyono's regime. We raised U.S. concerns about the decree with a Presidential foreign affairs advisor who told us that the decree was carefully crafted to appease radicals while allowing Ahmadiyah to continue to carry on privately. Ahmadis across the country continued to worship freely on June 11 and to date there has been no violence in the wake of the June 9 decree. END SUMMARY.

RAISING U.S. CONCERNS

12. (C) On June 11 DepPol/C raised USG concerns regarding the religious freedom implications of the joint decree on Ahmadiyah (reftel) with Tri Sukma Djandam, a foreign affairs advisor for President Yudhoyono. DepPol/C told Djandam that the Ahmadiyah decree has raised great concern with the U.S. Government and in Congress, and could affect Indonesia's image. Djandam said they were well aware of the international implications and were concerned, saying he would convey our concern to his superiors. Djandam also reassured us that the government will not take any action to prevent Ahmadis from worshipping, provided that they stay within their own communities.

AHMADIYAH FREE TO WORSHIP

13. (U) Vice President Kalla told the press on June 10 that the Ahmadiyah community can continue to worship in Indonesia. The government has no plans to ban Ahmadiyah provided it follows the law, he said. He said this in light of the June 9 joint ministerial decree prohibiting Ahmadiyah from proselytizing and conducting religious activities which deviate from "the principle teachings of Islam" (reftel).

¶4. (U) Harkristuti Harkrisnowo, Director General for Human Rights at the Ministry of Law and Human Rights and prominent rights champion, criticized the decree. She told press the edict may have been a result of pressure from hardliners. She publicly encouraged Ahmadiyah followers to pursue legal recourse through the Constitutional Court, a path which lawyers planning their defense told poloff is likely (reftel).

¶6. (U) However, the Minister of Religious Affairs, known for his conservative tendencies, told the press if the Ahmadi spread the teaching that there is a prophet after Muhammad, they could face police sanctions. He did not clarify if Ahmadiyah would face sanctions if they continued to use such teachings internally but did add that Ahmadiyah could no longer remain closed to outside clerics. Mission will meet with the Ministry of Religious Affairs to express concern.

#### DESTABILIZING YUDHOYONO

¶7. (C) The decree itself was a typical display of the Yudhoyono administration's balancing act of secular and conservative Islamic interests. Djandam told DepPol/C the decree was carefully planned to appease radical elements and still accommodate the Ahmadis' right to practice their faith. The decree's ambiguous wording was "a delicate balance" and "we have to be a little tricky" in devising a compromise, he said. Asked why President Yudhoyono's administration is so concerned about a few fringe radical elements, he told us the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), and others, are backed by certain members of Parliament and conservative politicians who want to destabilize this administration.

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¶8. (C) Other contacts confirmed that there is likely political backing behind FPI and the Ahmadiyah controversy. Leaders in the country's largest Muslim organizations, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama, and from the major Islamic party Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), all expressed concern to poloff that FPI is backed by parties wishing to destabilize Yudhoyono's administration in advance of the 2009 elections.

¶9. (C) International Crisis Group senior analyst Sidney Jones agreed. She told poloffs that political backing for FPI might come from one of two camps: retired general and presidential hopeful Wiranto, who is widely known to have backed the civilian militia out of which FPI was established in 1998; or the political team of retired general and former BIN chief Hendropriyono, who has been associated with former president Megawati's campaign. Jones said the police once controlled FPI, but those connections have since declined if not disappeared altogether. (Note: FPI was established in 1998 out of the Wiranto-funded civilian militia that countered the student movement.)  
HUME